

BOOK REVIEW

CHEATHAM, SCOOTER and MARSHALL C. JOHNSTON with LYNN MARSHALL. 1995. **The Useful Wild Plants of Texas, the Southeastern United States, the Southern Plains, and Northern Mexico. Volume I. *Abronia* thru *Arundo*.** (ISBN 1- 887292-01-2, hbk). Useful Wild Plants, Inc., 2612 Sweeney Lane, Austin, TX 78723, U.S.A. \$125.00. xxi+ 568 pp. 304 color photos, 267 distribution maps.

This first of twelve volumes provides encyclopedic treatment of 78 genera and 267 species of native and wild growing plants of Texas and of botanically, read ecologically, related adjacent areas. Useful applies to a plants utility as food, natural products, medicine, fiber, landscape or aesthetic value, oil, folk use, etc. Each genus is treated alphabetically and includes a description of the 'group' and each taxon, botanical and common nomenclature, plant identification, habitat, a detailed rangewide distribution map, EXCELLENT color photograph(s), a broad category of uses as appropriate for the taxon, including ethnobiology, author experience by category of use, literature cited, index and more.

The treatments are well written and easy to read and understand. Marginal notes with keywords are provided for ease of location of subjects of particular interest. Unlike most encyclopedias, the overall design is aesthetically appealing and wholly supports the user friendliness of the volume.

Useful Wild Plants is the first fruit of a labor of love that spans at least two decades. According to the authors and publisher, six additional volumes are ready for press; but, with financial constraints only one or, hopefully two!, will be published per year. I, for one, am confident this daunting task will be accomplished.

Anyone interested in Texas' natural history, botany, ethnobiology, folk use of plants, conservation of Texas' natural heritage, natural plant products, traditional medicine, economic botany, plant propagation, or native plant landscaping will want to own this volume and those to come. This is a must have volume for every university and botanical library and certainly every major city or county library.

Useful Wild Plants is authoritative, comprehensive and thoroughly researched by an army of contributors, cooperators and volunteers. The distribution maps are, in my opinion, the best available for the treated species. The color photographs ARE the best.

In support of the production of the Useful Wild Plants of Texas encyclopedia, the authors have established a not-for profit corporation, Useful Wild Plants, Inc. Membership supports publication of the remaining volumes, includes the Useful Wild Plant Newsletter usually issued 'seasonally,' and entitles members to discounts on volumes to be published, and supports "Botany for the real World." Further information can be obtained from the publisher or from uwp@jumpnet.com. (See also Sida 16(3):609. 1995).—David H. Riskind, Natural Resource Program, Texas Parks and Wildlife, 4200 Smith School Rd. Austin, TX 78744, U.S.A.